

Comment to the FCC team reviewing EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS BY AMATEUR RADIO AND IMPEDIMENTS TO AMATEUR RADIO COMMUNICATIONS (12-91)

I am an Amateur Extra class licensee, Dan Hoogterp, W4LI, living in a deed restricted community. Our community explicitly prohibits any outside antenna, except for small satellite dishes for receiving satellite television signals. It is unlikely the community would consider changes to its policy on its own, given the process by which these rules are established.

One of my aims in pursuing amateur radio was emergency communications, particularly given that I live in a region susceptible to hurricanes and severe weather. Since I am prohibited from any outdoor amateur radio antenna, this makes advance preparedness and routine participation in emergency response activities impractical. I have foregone most amateur activity and all emergency communications response involvement. Had I realized the strength of these restrictions before becoming licensed a little more than a year ago, I might well have avoided amateur radio altogether.

Although much of the need for emergency communications is by nature temporary and mobile, the preparedness, organization, practice, and active group membership all depend on routine access to the airwaves by participating amateur radio operators. This can be established much more effectively and broadly with persistent stations of moderate capability, even if actual emergencies require combinations of permanent and temporary or portable stations. Aside from maintaining operating skills, this also ensures that core station equipment is functioning properly in its normal environment, prior to any temporary or portable activation that may be appropriate.

Under the present environment, as more and more communities are established with deed covenants and restrictions regarding antennas, the opportunity for widespread amateur operation and readiness is significantly diminished over time. Further, the more densely populated urban and suburban areas, where amateur radio antennas are more likely restricted, could potentially have more needs in the event of a serious emergency or disruption, due to the higher population density and its reliance on complex infrastructure.

The authority of the FCC should be exercised to ensure reasonable allowances for amateur service antennas in all communities. This would alter this restrictive landscape and greatly encourage participation and readiness of the amateur community.

For example, the FCC could apply its jurisdiction to allow a small number of amateur antennas (e.g., one or two) to be installed by licensees on their own private / exclusive use area/property. Limitations such as 60 feet in height, 30 feet above their highest structure, more than X feet from any neighbor, positioned where possible to minimize visual impact, fixed / non-moving elements only, weight/element-diameter restrictions, coloring to reduce visual impact, and others could all be crafted to balance the aesthetic concerns of communities with the need for practical antennas (these are just examples, acknowledging the need to balance interests).

Note: I mention a moving antenna restriction as a possibility because rotating beams and their structures typically have the highest visual impact. Verticals and wire or fixed element antennas are

generally much less visually intrusive. Alternatively, limiting the diameter of elements, weight of structure, or some other means could limit the explicitly permitted antennas to balance visual footprint. Outdoor fixed verticals or dipole antennas have minimal visual impact and would enable reasonable operation for amateurs in many situations that preclude effective operation today.

Thank you for taking the time to review my comments and considering this matter.

Sincerely,

Dan Hoogterp, W4LI